

Arrested Corruption, Deepening Democracy? The 2014 CADI Asian Democracy Index Survey in the Philippines

**MIGUEL PAOLO P. REYES, CLARINDA LUSTERIO BERJA,
JOSHUA HANS B. BAQUIRAN**

Introduction

2014 was a fascinating year for those who study Philippine politics. Three opposition senators were charged with plunder in connection with their alleged participation in a scam involving nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that were seemingly registered solely for the purpose of raiding state coffers, allegedly masterminded by retired soldier's wife-turned-billionaire Janet Lim Napoles. Many others who drew or draw their salary from taxpayers' money were also criminally charged in connection with the said scam. Other notable occurrences in 2014 are the unseating of a governor/film actor for campaign overspending and the displays of (excessive) zeal for proper tax collection by the Bureau of Internal Revenue commissioner. These occurrences made it seem that President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III's reform rhetoric was in fact more than mere rhetoric.

However, Aquino's reputation as a genuine reformer was also heavily tarnished in 2014. The Supreme Court (SC) struck down the chief executive's Disbursement Acceleration Program or DAP for being contrary to the Constitution, echoing what it did last year when it declared that Congress's Priority Development Assistance Fund or PDAF¹ is unconstitutional. DAP was a mechanism for making cross-government branch transfers

Miguel Paolo P. Reyes is university research associate at the Third World Studies Center, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines Diliman. Clarinda Lusterio Berja is assistant professor at the Political Science Program of the Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Manila. Joshua Hans B. Baquiran is a Master of Arts in History candidate at the Department of History, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines Diliman.

(executive to legislative) of "stimulus funds" from "savings"—e.g., funds from projects that were (irregularly) discontinued at the middle of the fiscal year.² Aquino's performance/trust ratings dropped significantly after the SC's decision was promulgated; in the words of one analyst, Aquino's impressively lengthy "presidential honeymoon" finally ended, more than halfway into his term (Mangahas 2014).

Even with—or perhaps, as further evinced by—the DAP controversy, it nevertheless seemed that the corrupt in government were at long last being made to answer for placing their interests above those of the public. Moreover, if one accepts the statements in Aquino's fifth State of the Nation Address (SONA) uncritically, one would think that the Philippines was undergoing socioeconomic change for the better since Aquino took office. According to the president, his administration invested in the nation's "most valuable resource"—its people—via programs such as (DAP-funded) scholarships for Technical Educations and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) programs and the Conditional Cash Transfer program for indigents (2014). Aquino listed economic gains—reiterating the country's attainment of investment grade status in the eyes of major credits rating agencies, listing the successes of public-private partnership projects, among others (Aquino 2014). He declared that "the inherited backlog in [text]books, chairs, and classrooms [had been] erased" (Aquino 2014). He showed filmed testimonials of people from the various sectors his administration had supposedly helped—from a TESDA scholarship beneficiary to a member of an indigenous group (Aquino 2014). Throughout his address, he thanked members of his cabinet and his known supporters (Aquino 2014). In many ways, his SONA sounded like a farewell speech, aware as he was that he had a little over a year left in his term;³ as he was winding down his speech, he said that "after everything we've achieved, I can say that I am content [because] I am sure that when I'm gone, many will take my place and continue what we have started" (Aquino 2014).

Aquino's penultimate SONA, however, seemed to gloss over the fact that many anti-democratic issues remain the scourge of the Philippines, a number of which are attributable to his administration: reminders of the limits of freedom of expression in the country loom left and right; an information gap keeps many from making well-informed political, economic, and social decisions; egregiously, the current administration's anti-corruption campaigns do not appear to have significantly helped to raise the quality of life of the millions who are objectively poor in the country.

In addition, the Aquino administration remained burdened with the under-addressed problems of the state in the last five years. The trial of the suspects in the “Maguindanao Massacre”—one of the main reasons why the Philippines is considered one of the worst countries in the world to be a journalist—still moved at a glacial pace. Many communities affected by 2013’s twin catastrophes—a powerful earthquake and a devastating super-typhoon—still had limited access to basic utilities.

What did the respondents of the Philippine 2014 Asian Democracy Index survey—who had diverse professional backgrounds and were of various ideological orientations—collectively think about the apparent failure of the government to reify the slogan, “if there is no corruption, there will be no poverty”? How did they think the country was faring under an embattled reformer, the son of the country’s democracy icons,⁴ whose claim that the people are his “bosses” became questionable to more than his usual opponents?

Survey Methodology

For 2014, the Philippine ADI team once again utilized the modified ADI methodology that we have been using since our 2011 pilot survey. We started the survey in late June; the penultimate filled-out survey form was returned to us in October 2014. The last survey form was submitted in February 2015. . As we have done since 2012, we set our target sample size of specialists in politics, the economy, and civil society—selected from long list of academics, nongovernmental organization/civil society organization (NGO/CSO) members, and “private sector” members via quota sampling—to fifty-four. However, we were only able to gather thirty-six filled-out ADI questionnaires, or 66.67 percent of our target number. Table 1 shows the 2014 respondent profile.

As in previous years, “L-LL” stands for the “(extreme) left-left leaning” ideological range, while “R-RL” stands for the “(extreme) right-right leaning” ideological range. Instead of quoting our (lengthy) standard definition of these two categories, refer to table 2 for an explanation of who we consider left leaning and right leaning. Since our sampling method is quota sampling, potential respondent categorization is done at the listing stage and is based on potential respondents’ writings, reputation, et cetera.

The ideological dimension of our categorization system acknowledges that one can be critical of the government yet is not a socialist (or is primarily anti-government precisely because the government is perceived to

be “socialist”). However, it automatically classifies those who support socialist policies yet are supportive of the government as “right,” even if many of them prefer to be called “left.” Nevertheless, we think that our L-LL-and-R-RL system is a robust heuristic device, capable of approximating ideological stances that do not change with the chief executive.

Table 1. Respondent Profile, 2014

| Field | Affiliation | NO. of L-LL | NO. of R-RL |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Politics | Academe | 2 | 2 |
| | NGO/CSO | 1 | 3 |
| | Private Sector | 1 | 3 |
| Economy | Academe | 3 | 1 |
| | NGO/CSO | 3 | 2 |
| | Private Sector | 1 | 2 |
| Civil Society | Academe | 3 | 1 |
| | NGO/CSO | 2 | 3 |
| | Private Sector | 2 | 1 |
| | | 18 | 18 |

As always, we tried to include respondents from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—the country’s major island groups—in our survey, though the survey is still Luzon-centric.

For 2014, our survey participation refusal rate was at 63.27 percent, which is the lower than the refusal rate during the previous year but about the same as that of the 2011 pilot test. This is despite the fact that we have asked mostly previous respondents—in all but one case, via email—to answer our 2014 survey this year; of the ninety-eight invitations we had sent out, forty-seven were sent to persons who had never participated in our project. A total of 50.98 percent of those who had previously participated in the project explicitly or constructively declined to participate in the 2014 survey.

Unlike in previous years (2012 and 2013), none of the respondents chose to be interviewed instead of answering a questionnaire on their own. Some respondents, however, commented that the implied suggested time of completion—20-30 minutes—was unrealistic. In response to this comment, potential respondents from then on were told that the minimum time of survey form completion is approximately one hour.

Lastly, as before, our analysis hews closely to what is prescribed in the ADI Guidebook (CADI 2012).

Table 2. Left-Left Leaning and Right-Right Leaning Categories

| LEFT-LEFT LEANING | RIGHT-RIGHT LEANING | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Critical of government | Neoliberal policy support | RIGHT- RIGHT LEANING |
| Socialist policy support | Supportive of government | RIGHT- RIGHT LEANING |

Findings

Our results are summarized in table 3. As can be seen via comparing the subprinciple and core principle scores in table 3 with those of table 4, save for the political field—which is dominated by right-leaning respondents—all of the 2014 ratings are lower than the ratings in the previous year. The most drastic drop is in economic pluralization—a 1.16 point decline.

Note however, that generally, these differences are not significant. Moreover, we consider the following worth highlighting: 1) the economic pluralization score is still very low—currently lower than the $3.0 > 2.0$ score it usually receives—suggesting that inequality is, by the estimates of both L-LL and R-RL respondents, still the country’s most egregious economic problem; and 2) currently, the scores for political autonomy and civil society competition are, as in the years prior, the top two field sub-principle scores, indicating that in the opinion of specialists, Philippine citizens are still generally able to freely (non-violently) oppose the government and that few forms of social discrimination that remain embedded in Philippine society.

All of the above makes it seem safe to say that, based on scores alone, the macro-level state of Philippine democratization has remained unchanged for the better part of the Noynoy Aquino administration. Based on scores alone, whatever Noynoy Aquino is able to accomplish that may easily be projected as a positive development—impeaching or at least successfully arraigning the powerful and corrupt in government, happening to be the president when the country’s economic growth (by conventional indicators) is significantly improving, for example—since the numerous significant “gaps” in post-(re)democratization Philippines have not been addressed, the “shape” of Philippine democratization remains the same,

with pluralization—one of equalization’s subprinciples—as the constantly underdeveloped sector (see figure 1).

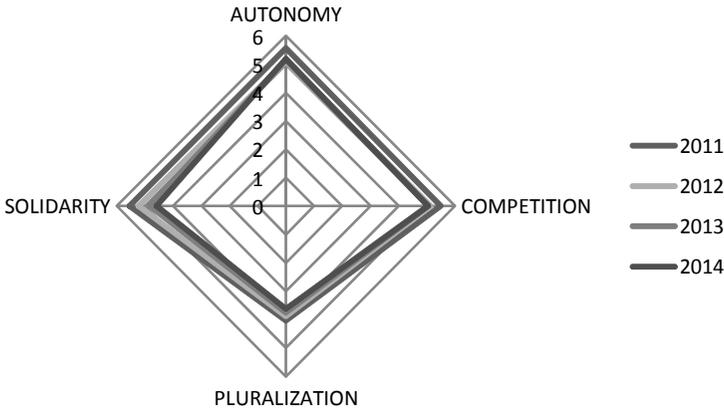
Table 3. Summary of Scores, 2014 ADI Survey in the Philippines

| Core Principles | Subprinciples | Fields | | | Subprinciple Indices | Core Principle Indices |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| | | Politics | Economy | Civil Society | | |
| Liberalization (L) | Autonomy | 6.69 | 4.71 | 4.20 | 5.20 | 5.12 |
| | Competition | 5.31 | 4.23 | 5.57 | 5.04 | |
| Equalization (E) | Pluralization | 5.66 | 1.77 | 3.42 | 3.62 | 4.10 |
| | Solidarity | 5.83 | 3.9 | 4.03 | 4.59 | |
| Democracy Indices | | L = 5.01 E = 4.98 | L = 6.00 E = 5.75 | L = 4.47 E = 2.84 | PHILIPPINE ADI = 4.61 | |

Table 4. Summary of Scores, 2013 ADI Survey in the Philippines

| Core Principles | Subprinciples | Fields | | | Subprinciple Indices | Core Principle Indices |
|--|---------------|----------|----------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| | | Politics | Economy | Civil Society | | |
| Liberalization (L) Equalization (E) | Autonomy | 5.92 | 5.30 | 4.29 | 5.17 | 5.02 |
| | Competition | 4.11 | 4.95 | 5.56 | 4.87 | |
| | Pluralization | 4.47 | 2.93 | 3.91 | 3.77 | |
| | Solidarity | 5.49 | 4.48 | 5.00 | 4.99 | |
| Democracy Indices | | L = 5.01 | L = 5.01 | L = 5.13 | PHILIPPINE ADI = 4.70 | |
| | | E = 4.98 | E = 4.98 | E = 3.70 | | |

Figure 1. Subprinciple Scores, 2011-2014



The ratings can only say so much. The following discuss the comments gathered from the respondents, arranged by attribute per field subprinciple.

Politics

Political Autonomy

The Level of Performance of State Violence. Undue violence remains a problem. More conservative respondents have characterized such violence as the result of poor control over armed forces and sensitivity to criticism. A left-leaning respondent, however, stated that "the state apparatus selectively chooses whom to target, and which crimes to solve."

Civil Rights. Overall, civil rights, according to the right-leaning respondents, are generally well protected. A left-leaning respondent strayed from the others' assessment, saying that "institutional protection tends to be selective, in favor of the 'haves' and propertied classes in society."

Freedom to Organize and Act in Political Groups. For the item about freedom of assembly and the freedom of political groups to conduct (political) activities, only one group—the R-RL NGO/CSO group—gave very high scores (8-9), while the rest gave scores ranging from 4-7. Surprisingly, the 4 came from an R-RL respondent. However, the respondents generally agree that Philippine politics is a game of the elite.

Permission for Political Opposition. The respondents generally agree that political opposition is permitted in the Philippines, at least according to the law. One respondent noted that there does not seem to be a "clear opposition" in Philippine politics in 2014.

Political Competition

The Expansion of Universal Suffrage. A year or so after the last Philippine elections, the respondents have a somewhat mixed opinion on the protection of suffrage in the Philippines. Most of the respondents believe that voters are generally free to vote who they please, but numerous externalities can influence voters' choices, such as election-related violence and poverty. A left-leaning respondent said that "elites and political dynasties always have an edge in elections."

Efficiency of the State. Most of the respondents did give government policy implementation high marks. One respondent noted that even traffic/road laws are poorly implemented. Most agree with one respondent who said that "there appears to be a chasm between enacted public policies (laws) and [their] implementation."

The Presence of Non-elected Hereditary Power. Majority of the respondents—left and right alike—believe that non-elected groups (which include the religious groups) have a significant share—if not a monopoly—of political power in the country. Two respondents said that the Philippines is under an oligarchy.

The Rule of Law. Generally, the respondents think that the rule of law is respected in the country. Many of them, however, noted that the rule of law does not apply to all in the Philippines; as one respondent noted, political elites are not treated the same way as ordinary citizens, even if, say, they have been indicted for stealing billions of pesos from the government treasury.

Electoral Fairness. Several respondents gave comments about the inadequate implementation of the country's "voluminous" election law. Some respondents have blamed this on, the elites, who continue to try to manipulate election results even after elections became automated in 2010. One respondent went so far as to characterize Philippine elections as "dysfunctional."

Transparency. The country's average transparency score is 5.75. As in previous years, the fact that the Freedom of Information bill is still a bill in Congress was repeatedly highlighted. A left-leaning respondent said that the implementation of transparency laws already in force is "nil."

According to some respondents, hiring of government officials is often based on “who you know/are related to.”

Independence and Checks and Balances among State Power Apparatuses. Many of the right-leaning respondents agree with a left-leaning respondent that the executive dominates the other branches. Even with a constitution guaranteeing mutual independence of the three branches, a respondent found that the president can control Congress with discretionary/intelligence funds. One respondent found inadequate monitoring and evaluation of state-funded projects to be the main problem negatively affecting this indicator.

Political Pluralization

Dispersion of Political Power in Parliament (Congress). The respondents once again highlighted elite dominance of Congress and the influence the president can exert on them. There is no loyalty to a party, said some of the respondents—only loyalty to the powerful. The only optimistic comment came from one R-RL respondent who believes that “the minority party is still consulted on [legislation].”

Political Representation. An L-LL respondent described the Philippine Congress as “a privileged multi-millionaires’ club.” Generally, the right-leaning respondents agree; another respondent said that “representation in Congress gives shameful edge to political dynasties.” The only respondent to give a high score for the item connected to this attribute highlighted how the party-list system allows for sectoral representation in the country’s Congress.

Democratization of State Institutions. In response to being asked, “How fairly and rationally do you think government agencies are implementing policies in your country,” the collective response is “not very.” Again, influence-peddling is cited as a problem in Philippine lawmaking and implementation. Some respondents, however, noted that public hearings are held for vital measures, though one respondent implied that such hearings are at times all for naught; superiors’ wishes are paramount.

Participation System and Degree of Participation. High voting turnout and the “existence of active social movements, [people’s organizations, and NGOs]” were given by the respondents as evidence of high citizen participation in the country’s political processes. One respondent, however, said that participation outside elections is rather poor in the Philippines.

Political Solidarity

Affirmative Action. The respondents noted the numerous programs for minorities—including indigenous peoples, the poor, and persons with disabilities—to help them better participate in political processes. Based on the scores they gave, most of the respondents agree with one R-RL respondent who said that these programs can still be made better.

The Public Credibility of the Current Democratic Institution. The comments of the respondents reflect how public trust in government in general and the legislature declined, according to surveys conducted by the likes of Social Weather Stations, in light of the PDAF/DAP affairs. According to an L-LL respondent, people still trust government enough to “utilize what is available for them to exercise in the legal system.” All are in agreement that Congress is only barely trusted these days.

The Public Credibility of a Democratic Institution and the Public Attitude to Democratic Participation. Generally, the public still trusts that democracy is the ideal form of government, according to the respondents. This assessment comes with caveats. An L-LL respondent said that this trust in democracy as a superior political system may be due to the negative memories of the Marcos dictatorship (1972-1986) and, as implied or explicitly stated in some responses, a lack of a clear definition of “democracy.”

Economy

Economic Autonomy

Freedom/Autonomy of Economic Activities from Political Intervention. Opinion on the relationship of government and private companies is mixed. Some of the experts say that the government exerts overwhelming direct and indirect control of companies; others say it is the other way around, with oligopolies strongly influencing political leaders.

Protection of Basic Labor Rights. The respondents acknowledge the existence of numerous laws guaranteeing the protection of labor rights—implementation of these laws is thought to be poor, however. The respondents said the same regarding laws prohibiting child labor. One respondent noted that these laws can also be restrictive (e.g., the prohibition of strikes by state employees).

Autonomy of Decision-making Process for the Formation of International Political Economy Policy. Do foreign companies influence Philippine economic policy? One (extreme) left-leaning respondent responded

with the equivalent of a resounding “yes.” The other respondents agree to an extent, citing that there are constitutional restrictions on foreign equity—restrictions that many in Congress now want amended.

Economic Competition

Economic Transparency. A right-leaning respondent evaluated company transparency to be good, based on disclosures made by listed companies. Others state that the disclosure laws are, by and large, not followed or poorly implemented. Crafty elites, according to one respondent, would, for example, use “shell companies” to bypass anti-monopoly laws.

Economic Fairness. Ratings for the item under this attribute range from 0-6. Overall, the respondents believe that the Philippine economy is an uneven playing field; one respondent reiterated that all industries in the Philippines are oligopolistic. Small/medium businesses are perceived to be no match for large companies.

Government’s Accountability. The government is not seen to be a staunch advocate of labor rights protection despite the letter of the law. One respondent highlighted how the labor sector still suffers due to contractualization and low wages. Strikes may be lower (Aquino highlighted the same in his SONA), but one respondent noted that this may be due to repression, “not necessarily [due to] industrial peace.”

Corporate Accountability. Most of the respondents think that most private firms/companies—save for the large ones—are generally anti-labor. Some left-leaning respondents noted how some companies find “creative ways” to undermine security of tenure, among other labor rights.

Economic Solidarity

The Social Security System. One respondent said that social insurance programs in the country are “improving.” His is the unpopular opinion among the respondents. Two noted that because of privatization, welfare services are biased against the poor. Another respondent said that these programs “largely fall into the patronage trap.”

The Activity of Trade Unions. Contractualization was repeatedly cited as an occurrence that is severely weakening trade unionism in the Philippines. One respondent noted that urban trade unions are better organized than their rural counterparts. An R-RL respondent said that labor is weaker than before because of “the fast changing global environment.” Labor unions are also not seen by most to be very influential in

formulating government policy and in shaping management policies. Two respondents noted that diminishing membership in unions is the reason for the latter two situations.

Corporate Watch. Only listed companies can be well-monitored by the public, according to one respondent. Others noted that there are some efforts both by citizens and the state to better monitor companies, but they are weak or poorly sustained.

Awareness of Reducing Inequality. According to most of the respondents, public enthusiasm in reducing economic inequality in the Philippines is in the low-middle range. Many are “not willing to do their part,” said one respondent; “a great majority are apathetic,” said another. An optimistic respondent from the L-LL camp said that there is “a general distaste for ostentatious displays of wealth and brazen inequality,” but noted that this co-exists with high consumerism and “a tendency to blame the poor for their poverty.”

Civil Society

Civil Society Autonomy

Autonomy of Society from State Intervention. The state was found by the respondents to be generally more influential than government-supported NGOs including (or especially) those that were the centerpiece of the Janet Lim Napoles scam. One respondent cited the many who say that the Philippines is a “non-democracy,” a “flawed democracy,” or an “oligarchic democracy,” though he still gave the country’s citizen’s a fairly high freedom score. Many respondents highlighted media freedom/freedom of expression as being generally well-protected in the country.

Autonomy of Society from the Market. Private companies are seen to be highly influential in Philippine society. Three respondents—one L-LL and two R-RL—noted that media, though free, is influenced by the companies that sponsor them. One L-LL respondent mentioned the Freedom of Information bill; he said that “[the] government has yet to fully recognize that access to information is crucial in the democratization process and is a basic human right.”

Autonomy of Social Members. On the first item under this attribute, one respondent cited official statistics stating that poverty incidence has gone down in recent years but conceded that, as another respondent noted, poverty remains high. All respondents appear to agree that there

are numerous hindrances to adequate and efficient basic service delivery—lack of sufficient data/studies/planning and successive calamities, among others.

In response to the second item under this attribute, the respondents said that vulnerable groups are legally protected, but according to some of the respondents, such protection is not well-enforced. One respondent, however, said that the elderly are positively discriminated, but also noted that rural folk remain one of the most vulnerable groups in the Philippines, a fact seconded by official statistics cited by one respondent.

On the third item under this attribute, three respondents—one L-LL and two R-RL—were in agreement that opportunities are given to most citizens. The L-LL respondent noted developments that show that the state/certain legislators are finding ways to more students more “globally competitive.” Both he and another L-LL respondent, however, worry about the difficulties in fully implementing the K(inder)-(Grade) 12 basic education system, which started implementation in 2012.

Tolerance. Few respondents saw their countrymen as generally non-tolerant. One respondent said that this due to the country’s heterogeneous population. Another respondent, however, noted that religious prejudices “can be quite strong,” while another shone a spotlight on the discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) citizens.

Civil Society Competition

Capability of Voluntary Association. Generally, those who gave comments on this attribute had a middling opinion of the influence of NGOs on Philippine society. They noted positive cooperation with government (e.g., when NGOs work together with local governments during disasters) and negative “cooperation” with politicians (i.e., the Napoles scam).

Public Good of Voluntary Association. Two R-RL respondents agreed that NGOs generally work for the good of the public, working hand-in-hand with the government, notwithstanding the Napoles scam. One L-LL respondent was also generous in his assessment, though he implied that there are cases wherein “working hand-in-hand with the government” means politician-controlled NGOs diverting public funds to the pockets of politicians instead of to legitimate state projects.

Transparency of Voluntary Associations. Four respondents—half L-LL and half R-RL—looked at NGOs as generally democratic; “conscientious about good internal governance,” “progressive in terms of social outlook,” and “part and parcel of governance at the national and

local levels” were among the descriptions of NGOs (in general) given by these respondents. Others gave no comments, but gave a “4” in response to the item attached to this attribute.

Diversity of Voluntary Associations. More respondents look at NGOs as not particularly diverse, with one respondent noting that most of them “delve in poverty issues.” Another said that those who do not do “charity work” have difficulty obtaining funds. Somewhat agreeing with the previously discussed respondents, one respondent noted that social enterprise NGOs are on the rise.

Civil Society Pluralization

Inequality of Public Spheres. Media fairness is the focus of this attribute. Ratings for the items attached to this attribute ranged from 2-7. The comments reflect that many of the respondents think that the quality of news reporting is generally good in the Philippines, but noticeably biased, with some media outlets, in their opinion, being obviously pro- or anti-administration.

Inequality of Information. All of the respondents seem to agree that there is a significant information gap (or gaps) in the country. There is a perceived rural-urban information gap and one between the “A-B-C” (rich-middle) class and the poor. Moreover, many information sources that are widely available—including social media for those with access to the Internet and sensationalist radio programs—are deemed untrustworthy by some of the respondents.

Inequality of Culture. Culture is not a government priority, according to two respondents. Two other respondents said that there are many sources of entertainment available to both rich and poor, but one of these respondents characterized radio and television as the only “limited forms of entertainment” accessible to the poor.

Inequality of Power. All the respondents agree that elites are largely in control of Philippine society.

Civil Society Solidarity

Institutional Guarantee of Diversity and Affirmative Actions. Based on their comments, some of the respondents do not think there are sufficient affirmative action programs in the Philippines. One respondent noted that women and LGBTs are still, in some cases, explicitly or implicitly discriminated against.

Participation and Support of Social Groups. Except for, according to one respondent, faith-based organizations, citizen participation in NGOs/

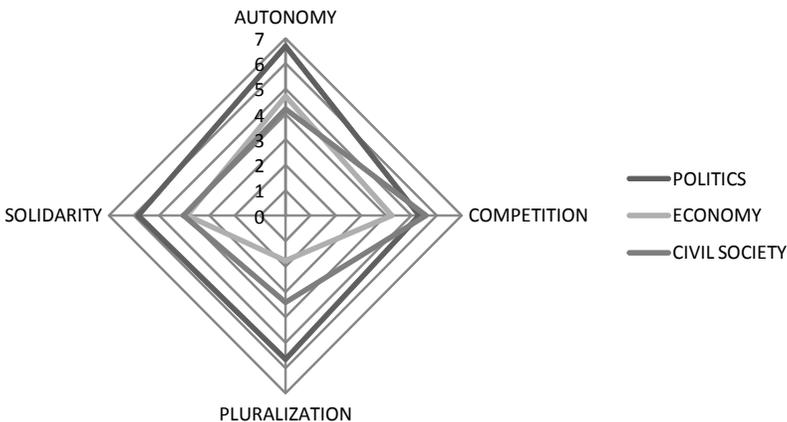
CSOs are seen by the respondents to be generally low. One respondent shared that in his home province, more citizens became more familiar with NGOs because of the Napoles scam, but, because of the scam, started to think of such groups as “outlets for ‘dirty money.’”

Governance of the State and Civil Society. NGO participation in policymaking is legally encouraged, said some of the respondents, and some NGOs are seen to be active in policymaking and engagement with implementing agencies, but overall, the respondents think that NGOs only have a middling influence on the government.

Analysis

Figure 2 is a graphical representation of the subprinciple scores in table 3, clearly showing how, as has been the case since 2011, the “weakest link” in Philippine democratization according to CADI standards is economic democratization. Again, as figure 1 shows, the main effect of this egregious deficiency is a low overall pluralization score, meaning resources/capital is highly concentrated in the hands of a few—an undeniable reality in the Philippines.

Figure 2. Philippine ADI Subprinciple Scores, 2014



Figures 3 and 4 also show similarities in the results of the 2014 survey with those of previous surveys. Figure 3 shows that the scores of the political experts hardly vary, while figure 4 shows that the economic experts have varying views of the state of Philippine economic autonomy, competition, and solidarity, but largely agree on the state of Philippine economic pluralization.

Figure 3. Philippine ADI Political Subprinciple Scores, 2011-2014

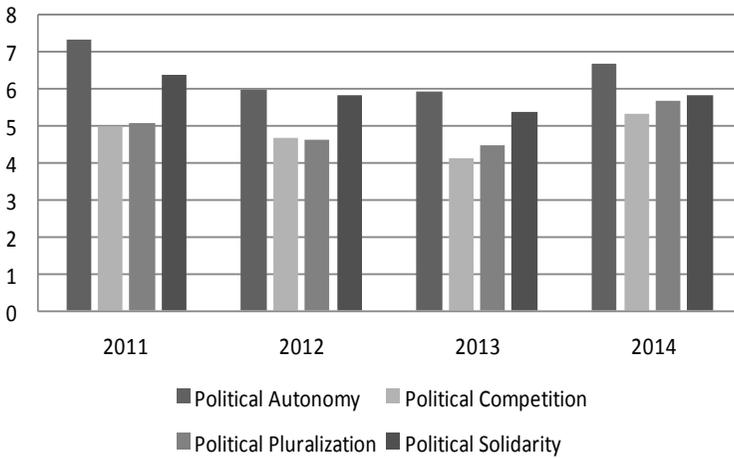


Figure 4. Philippine ADI Economic Subprinciple Scores, 2011-2014

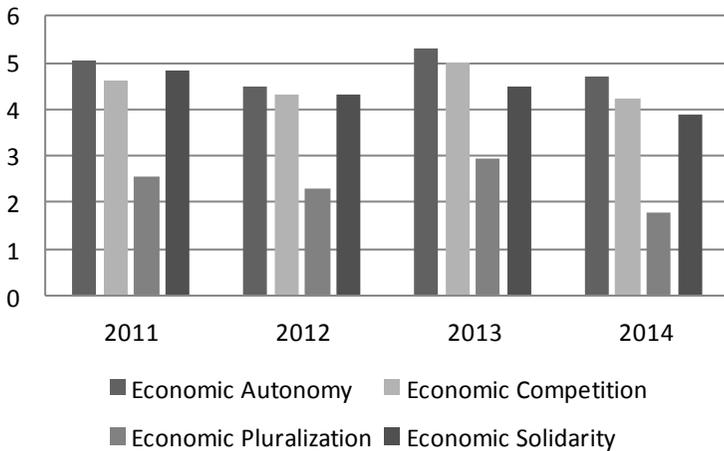
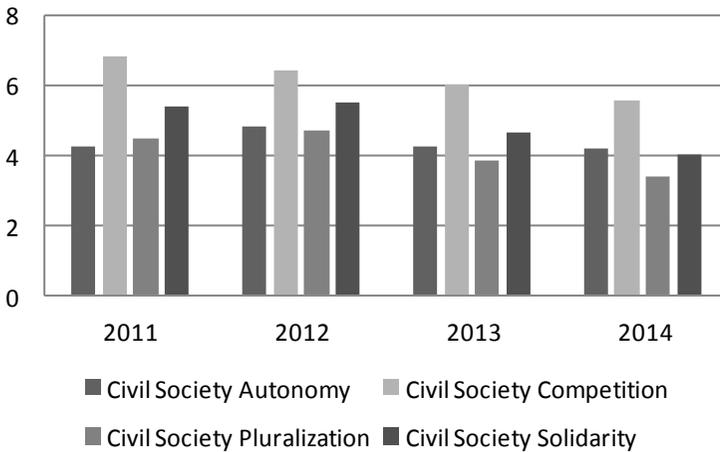


Figure 5, however, shows a potentially interesting shift. Save for civil society pluralization, the average scores per respondent in all other civil society subprinciples can more or less be evenly divided into a low (below 5) range and a high (above 5) range. As the comments from the civil society survey respondents support, this reflects how those knowledgeable in Philippine civil society concerns likely still have a generally positive opinion of Philippine NGOs/CSOs, but were rattled by the (possible) fallout Naples scam; among our respondents, many are now doubtful that NGOs/CSOs as a whole will retain what good will they had prior to that scam's unraveling.

Figure 5. Philippine ADI Civil Society Subprinciple Scores, 2011-2014



Conclusion

In 2014, Freedom House gave the Philippines the same ratings it received in 2012 and 2013—a 3 for “civil liberties” and a 3 for “political rights,” resulting in a 3.0 “freedom” rating.⁵ In keeping with a steady trend since 2010, the country’s 2014 Human Development Index is incrementally higher than it was in 2013 (.66 from .656).⁶ By these indicators, it seems that the politico-socioeconomic changes in the Philippines from 2013 to 2014 cannot be called upheavals; they are, at best, slow turns of a well-worn wheel. Indeed, the final results of the 2014 ADI survey largely agree with Freedom House and UNDP’s assessments.

Moreover, based on the 2014 ADI survey results, it seems that arresting corruption has not lead to a deepening of democracy (or further de-monopolization), or at least an increase in citizen participation in de-monopolization efforts in the political, economic, and civil society fields. Further democratization in the Philippines remains hindered by an entrenched elite capable of manipulating state policies, diverting to themselves the largesse of economic growth, and turning “NGO” into a dirty word. More must be done to discontinue the state’s unhealthy dependence on the elite—filling resource/information access gaps must remain a state-civil society priority. Perhaps, to Aquino’s credit, showing that even the powerful can be placed behind bars may deter the elite from directly or indirectly exacerbating inequality solely to increase their wealth. If only such efforts could be less mired in politics, especially given that another election season is nigh.

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Notes

1. PDAF is congressional “pork barrel,” earmarked discretionary funds, used, for example, for funding scholarships, funding infrastructure projects—or fattening up a congressional representative’s wallet.
2. The transfer has been justified by the executive as pursuant to the Administrative Code, an executive order of Noytoy Aquino’s mother, Corazon “Cory” Aquino, when the latter still had the power to legislate as a post-revolutionary president in 1987. Aquino filed a motion for reconsideration of the SC’s decision, basically arguing that DAP is legal. As of this writing, the SC’s action on the president’s motion is pending. In light of the scandal, many groups have filed impeachment complaints against the president (Quismodo 2014).
3. Aquino is constitutionally barred from seeking another six-year term. However, Aquino has stated that he is “open” to Charter Change not only to cut the judiciary’s power, but also, if the people—his “bosses”—will it, to remove term restrictions for the chief executive (Gutierrez 2014; Esguerra 2014).
4. Cory Aquino and her husband, Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr., opposition senator during the Marcos dictatorship. Noytoy Aquino made a rare, supposedly ad-libbed allusion to his mother and father in his SONA (perhaps an attempt to reinforce his integrity in light of the DAP controversy?).
5. See Freedom House (2014)
6. See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PHL>.

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